



TOWN OF GROTON
Affordable Housing Trust



Becky Pine, *Chair*
Carolyn Perkins, *Vice Chair*
Phil Francisco, *Member*
Richard Perini, *Member*

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, September 7, 2022
Time: 7 pm
Location: Virtual meeting held via Zoom
Members in attendance: Rick Perini, Becky Pine, Phil Francisco, and Carolyn Perkins
Referenced documents: [Putting Restrictions on Single Family Homes](#)
[Easton](#) program description
[Dartmouth](#) program description

Becky Pine called the Affordable Housing Trust to order at 7:01 pm. This meeting is being recorded. Cameras were turned on and Trust members were identified.

Minutes

Richard Perini moved to approve the July 27, 2022 minutes as corrected. Carolyn Perkins seconded and the motion carried (3:0) by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Perkins – aye and Pine – aye (Francisco absent).

Private Zoom Connection for July 27, 2022 regular session meeting

Becky Pine moved this item up in the agenda in order to address it now. She explained that due to technical difficulties with the July 27, 2022 regular session meeting, the meeting was moved to a private Zoom connection. At the time that the Trust made the switch, there were no members of the public in the meeting. The private Zoom connection was not available to the public. Becky Pine was advised to carefully review in this meeting what was done at the July 27 meeting which she did. The private zoom meeting was recorded and the video is available to watch on the Groton Channel's on demand webpage for government meetings.

Community Preservation Committee

Site Assessment Funds: has time frame expired

The Trust's application for site assessment funding from the CPC (Project 2022-04) was written to allow for the Trust to retain unspent funds at the end of the project.¹ Fran Stanley explained that the funding application was written with a one-year time frame because that was her understanding of the typical length of CPC projects. As such, the Site Assessment project concluded on June 30, 2022.

Phil Francisco entered the meeting at 7:11 pm.

¹ "For all of these reasons, the Trust would like to retain any unspent funds remaining at the June 30, 2022 conclusion of feasibility study so that the Trust will have the flexibility to make effective progress for the acquisition or creation of affordable housing as the process unfolds."

Fran Stanley met with the CPC on August 22, 2022 to discuss the matter. Carolyn Perkins was in attendance at CPC that evening as well. In the discussion, it was explained that project applicants are often allowed multiple years to complete a project -- as many as 4 or 5 years. Bruce Easom said that the Trust is welcome to send a letter to the CPC with its request for how it would prefer to have the project addressed. This is not to say that the CPC would automatically grant the Trust's request but that would be the next step if the Trust wants the funds to be transferred to the Trust's control. Becky Pine reminded the group that all community housing funds from the CPC come with statutory restrictions on the use of the funds regardless of whether there is active project oversight by the CPC. Carolyn Perkins recalled that it was the Town Accountant's preference and not the CPC's that kept the CPC serving as signatories on all site assessment invoices. Becky Pine said that she would follow up with the Town Accountant.

Phil Francisco said that the Trust's response is dependent on the broader context of the next agenda item – i.e. whether to apply for community housing funds from the Community Preservation Committee for this upcoming application cycle. The group agreed and the discussion flowed into this broader consideration. Becky Pine said that a meeting could be set up with the CPC to discuss how we can have access to more money to fulfill our goals as it would be preferable to have access to the funds with only an initial Town Meeting vote.

Applying for Community Housing funding for upcoming application cycle

Rick Perini asked how the Conservation Commission organizes its funding. Carolyn Perkins said that the Conservation Commission set a \$1 million goal for its fund. Rick Perini responded that at minimum he would want the Affordable Housing Trust to be treated like the Conservation Commission and we should meet with the Town committees (possibly Capital Committee or Finance Committee) to discuss that aim. Becky Pine said that she would follow up with the Bruce Easom, chair of the Conservation Commission as well.

Carolyn Perkins recalled that Mark Haddad recently met with the Community Preservation Committee and he suggested that money go directly to the housing trust which is the mode for some other CPC towns like Grafton. The CPC did not discuss the topic then because it was not on the agenda. Becky Pine observed that the Town Manager has been vocal in his support. Phil Francisco asked if the Trust should have a size and request in mind.

Carolyn Perkins suggested a list of priorities. She said that the Trust should emphasize that the Trust can grant to the Groton Housing Authority too. She added that the Trust can assure the CPC that the Trust would be helping the Groton Housing Authority meet their needs. Becky Pine said that the top item on the list is to purchase land suitable for building affordable housing. Carolyn Perkins suggested the Adams Avenue apartment building as an example of a missed opportunity since the Trust did not have ready funding available to purchase this 12-unit apartment building when it went up for sale.

Rick Perini commented that anything under \$500,000 is not worth asking for because there is little that one can do with less than \$500,000. There was ready agreement in the group with this sentiment.

Fran Stanley was directed to draft a CPC application for community housing funding. The initial application is only two pages long. The application should have broad language and not state a requested dollar amount. The general goal is to increase the stock of affordable housing in Groton.

Discuss Select Board idea of purchasing market rate homes to convert to affordable housing

Becky Pine noted that the Select Board recently revisited its own goal for affordable housing. During that discussion, an additional suggestion was made to buy market rate housing and sell it as affordable housing. Because of the resale, the Town might expect to pay less than the costs of building a new construction affordable home. Ahead of tonight's meeting, Fran Stanley sent an email with a memo describing three variations on this model. In addition, details about the Easton and Dartmouth programs were attached.

Trust members considered this model. Carolyn Perkins commented that the programs describe a daunting process for the applicant. She added that management costs for overseeing such programs might require additional staff support. Becky Pine and Rick Perini commented that the cost per unit affordable housing is still high. Rick Perini said that he has met with state economic development officials and they did not have much of an answer when he asked about how Groton can access affordable housing funding. Group discussed the tax credit application process and noted that there are competent nonprofits to apply for funding but that land acquisition is the hang up. Phil Francisco said that this conversation loops back to the earlier conversation about funding and how to leverage that money most effectively. Trust members agreed that participation in a tax credit project offers the greatest amount of leverage for Town dollars and offers the highest unit count yield too. For the Trust's priority list, group members rank the buying of a singleton property as fairly low on the list.

Fran Stanley will email links to the recorded presentation by David Hedison and Connie Donahue in 2020 and B'nai B'rith Housing in 2021. Both presentations centered on the use of tax credits to develop low-income rental housing.

Donations to the Trust

Trust members reviewed possible future donations to the housing trust by Restoration Capital (\$150,000; building The Village at Shepley Hill 55+ development) and Robert Kiley (\$50,000; building Hayes Woods subdivision). Fran Stanley reported that the Trust has not received any gifts to date.

Updates

Becky Pine spoke with Jeffrey Brem and he is building a duplex now on one of the parcels he owns in the vicinity of Main Street and Taylor Road. He is still deliberating about how he will develop the rest of the developable land he owns in that area.

The Trust has not heard anything further from engineer Richard Harrington who had wanted to build senior housing on his Gratuity Road land.

Donald Van Dyne, owner of 797 Boston Road, continues to want to rezone his residential/agricultural property at Four Corners to commercial zoning. His present plan is a citizens petition for the Fall Town Meeting to rezone commercially in order to build indoor pickle ball courts.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 21, 2022 at 7 pm (review draft CPC application)

Notes by Fran Stanley